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News Release
February 6, 2003

The Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention, housed in the Office of Safety Programs at Eastern Illinois University, will host a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Regional Workshop: "Setting the Standard for Campus and Community Prevention Efforts" on February 24, 2003, in Springfield, Illinois. Members of the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking and staff of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention will present the briefing. Similar meetings have been held in Pennsylvania, Washington, Virginia and Massachusetts; Illinois is the first midwestern state to host such an event.

This event will be held on the morning of Monday, February 24th, at the Renaissance Springfield Hotel, 701 East Adams, Springfield, Illinois. Registration and continental breakfast will be available from 7:30 AM until 8:45 AM. The briefing will begin at 8:45 AM and conclude with a luncheon and keynote address from 12:15 PM until 1:30 PM. It is being offered as part of the eleventh annual Campus Alcohol and Traffic Safety Conference. There is no fee to attend this meeting, but registration is required and can be completed by contacting the Illinois Higher Education Center by phone at 217/581-2019 or by e-mail at csbsm@eiu.edu. Funding for this event is provided through a grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Traffic Safety.

In April of 2002, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) released a groundbreaking report, "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges." In the NIAAA report, researchers outline the problem of high-risk drinking on U.S. college and university campuses. Rather than defining the issue by examining the level of drinking among college students, the Task Force focused on the detrimental and damaging consequences of high-risk drinking. Task Force member Ralph Hingson contributed some of the most dramatic findings included in the report. His research suggests that each year 1,400 college students die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries. In addition, alcohol is involved in 500,000 unintentional injuries, 600,000 assaults, and 70,000 cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape.

In reviewing the causes of high-risk drinking on campuses, the Task Force described the problem as a "culture of drinking" among college and university students. The belief among students that high-risk drinking is a "rite of passage" is supported by long-held customs and traditions, alcohol industry promotions and marketing, and lax policies and enforcement of laws. In order to address this "culture of drinking," the Task Force recommends that campuses intervene on three different levels: (1) with the entire student body, (2) in the broader college and community environment, and (3) with the at-risk individual student. This work is best implemented in a comprehensive, coordinated fashion, working with a broad base of support from within the campus and the community.

Representatives of the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking and the national Higher Education Center will provide an in depth look at the implications of the NIAAA College Task Force Report. Presenters will provide an overview of the Task Force and Report recommendations; a snapshot of the scope of the college alcohol and other drug problem; and a summary of recommendations.

The session will also include an overview of Statewide College Prevention Initiatives, a report on the progress of the Illinois Statewide Initiative, and presentations by representatives of Illinois campus programs. The morning will conclude with an examination of the challenges to implementation of effective programs and how to use the NIAAA Report to improve the effectiveness of campus prevention efforts.

Peter Lake, co-author with Robert Bickel of *The Rights and Responsibilities of the Modern University: Who Assumes the Risks of College Life?* predicts that: "The recommendations for addressing excessive college drinking outlined in the report published by NIAAA will soon begin appearing in the nation's courtrooms as evidence of what colleges are or are not doing. This publication will be used by attorneys for plaintiffs to illustrate how the institution of higher education has not done what it should have done or by attorneys for defending universities to show they made every effort to do what they could."

College and university administrators, faculty, staff and students, along with state and local agency representatives are encouraged to attend this meeting. Additional information regarding this event can be obtained by calling the Illinois Higher Education Center at 217/581-2019.

For further information contact:

Becky Markwell
Director

Illinois Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Other Drug and Violence Prevention
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920
Phone: 217/581-2019
Fax: 217/581-6621
E-mail: csbsm@eiu.edu